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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BUCHAREST 001106

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM SOCI ECON MARR MOPS RO IZ

SUBJECT: AMID INTERNAL DIVISIONS, OPPOSITION SOCIAL
DEMOCRATS REAFFIRM IRAQ POLICY, WEIGH IN ON OTHER ISSUES

REF: A. BUCHAREST 1093 (AND PREVIOUS)

1B. BUCHAREST 1092

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Mark Taplin
for Reasons 1.4 (a), (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. The center-left opposition Social Democratic Party (PSD) reaffirmed July 7 its call for a "timetable" for the withdrawal of Romanian forces from Iraq but underscored the party's commitment to consultation with the U.S. and other allies regarding a possible withdrawal. PSD officials strongly criticized during this meeting with diplomats the unexpected and "unilateral" June 29 call by Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu for a troop withdrawal (Ref A), accusing the PM's National Liberal Party (PNL) of injecting partisan politics into Romania's previously "bipartisan" foreign policy. While insisting that the time was still "not ripe" for a change in national legislation governing international adoptions, they stated Romania had also "made a mistake" on its handling of the issue. Our PSD contacts ruled out the possibility of an alliance with extreme nationalist Corneliu Vadim Tudor's Greater Romania Party (PRM) but admitted that some PSD members would welcome such a PSD-PRM deal. Although there are signs the PSD is increasingly adrift and former FM Geoana's leadership is failing to overcome internal divisions, the party has attempted to gain political traction from the recent brouhaha surrounding the PM's call for an Iraq troop exit. The PSD also remains a potentially attractive coalition partner for Basescu's Democratic Party (PD) in the event the governing center-right alliance breaks down due to the ongoing conflict between Basescu and PM Tariceanu. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Together with a dozen diplomats from Western Embassies, PolMilOff and Pol FSN attended July 7 a presentation organized by the center-left opposition Social-Democratic Party's (PSD) &Department of International Relations and European Affairs" and chaired by ex-FM Adrian Severin. PSD leaders characterized the event as an opportunity to "present the party's positions on key issues in light of recent developments."

Iraq: Timeline? Yes! Partisan Politicking? No Way!

¶3. (SBU) PSD International Secretary Victor Bostinaru strongly criticized Prime-Minister Calin Popescu Tariceanu and Defense Minister Teodor Atanasiu for "using Romania's foreign policy for domestic political gain." Noting that Romania's foreign policy had been mostly bipartisan in recent years, he characterized the PM/DefMin's unexpected June 29 call for withdrawal of Romanian forces from Iraq (Ref A) as a first, and unfortunate, departure from this bipartisan model. Bostinaru asserted that the PM and Defense Minister gave the

impression to other countries that "Romania is unreliable." According to Bostinaru (and other PSD leaders Post has spoken with), the PSD unequivocally supports consultations with allies on Iraq-related issues, as well as a transparent political debate within the parliament. Bostinaru stressed that the PSD position is that "we need to discuss a roadmap" for eventual troop return. However, Bostinaru asserted that that a referendum was "an absolutely crazy idea" as it would give voice to anti-US and anti-EU sentiment, specifically citing the names of leaders of the extremist, nationalist parties, Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Gigi Becali. (Note: The PM had earlier suggested a referendum on Romania's Iraq deployment. End Note.) However, the PSD spokesmen at the July 7 meeting also deplored the fact that the Supreme Council for National Defense (CSAT), which it characterized as an undemocratic body, made the "ultimate" decision on overseas deployments; PSD asserts parliament should be the decision making body. The PSD noted that it had warned in 2005 during the budget debate for the upcoming year that the GOR budget allocation for MOD would not generate sufficient revenue for overseas deployments.

International Adoptions: "We made a mistake"

¶4. (SBU) According to Severin and other PSD officials at the July 7 meeting, Romania "made a mistake" when it "embraced one point of view as being the EU point of view," regarding the legislation on international adoptions. PSD representatives acknowledged that it would have been better to express "our own point of view...and defend it." They singled out MEP and ex-Rapporteur for Romania Baroness Emma Nicholson for criticism, stating she misled Romania by falsely asserting her perspective was &the8 EU point of view. "Romania should balance all legitimate

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interests...especially interests of the child," Severin asserted. However, it would be unfortunate for the EU to make the adoption issue a "conditionality" for EU membership, as it would send a "disastrous message to the Romanian public." Severin noted that it would be difficult to "improve legislation" (read: change) now regarding international adoptions as a hasty modification would create the impression of instability, but he suggested that Romania is open to modification down the road. (Note: PolMilOff expressed appreciation for this stated openness on adoption issue. End Note.)

No Deal with Extremists

¶5. (SBU) Adrian Severin categorically rejected a PSD alliance with Corneliu Vadim Tudor's extreme nationalist Greater Romania Party (PRM), stressing that this "no alliance" policy reflected the point of view of most PSD leaders and rank and file. However, he continued, a PSD minority supported a PSD-PRM entente. It would not happen "now", he stressed, but discussions within PSD on its relations with the PRM are likely to continue, among "some members." PSD International Secretary Victor Bostinaru noted that the European Socialist

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Party encouraged its members to hew to the mainstream.

Tossing Stones: Let the Party Without Fault...

¶6. (C) According to Severin, the PSD "deplores" using corruption investigations to target political foes and, especially in the past few months, to "blackmail" PSD leaders to "go along" with the governing coalition. (Note: A PSD leader confirmed after the meeting that this remark was a gibe aimed at PSD General Secretary Miron Mitrea for his recently cordial relationship with President Basescu. End Note.) Severin, in reply to a question from a Danish diplomat decrying PSD's lousy corruption record, admitted that PSD had been "rejected at the polls" and needed to clean house. Severin retorted, however, that PSD's own past

weaknesses do not mean it should forego the right to criticize alleged chicanery by Basescu and the government.

¶7. (SBU) Severin and the other PSD officials justified the party's recent Motion of Censure against the GOR, filed June 28, as justified by what they characterized as the center-right government's numerous economic and political failures. Although they acknowledged the motion had "no chance" of passing and agreed that the motion is "the longest of its kind ever presented," they defended it as necessarily pointing to the center-right's incompetent handling of major social problems, including "widespread poverty."

Moldova on My Mind, Kosovo Too

¶8. (C) PSD representatives had harsh words for Basescu's unexpected July 1 remarks on the reunification of Romania and Moldova before Romania's entry into the EU. (Ref B) They slammed his remarks as "unrealistic," "sudden" and taken "without consultation." Severin emphasized the importance of a bipartisan foreign policy reflecting consultations among political parties. The PSD officials also pointed to what they characterized as "public statement inconsistencies" between the President and Foreign Minister Ungureanu regarding Kosovo. In the PSD's view, Romania should support a "package strategy" for Western Balkans, rather than its current ad hoc, piecemeal approach.

¶9. (C) Comment. Although the PSD expressed support some months ago for a "timetable" for the eventual withdrawal of Romanian troops from Iraq, the PSD leadership has publicly criticized the PM/DefMin call for a withdrawal as "unilateral" and demonstrating "a lack of credibility" to Romania's allies. Privately, PSD leaders have reminded us that it was under the former PSD government that Romanian troops first deployed to Iraq (and Afghanistan). Although the PSD leadership is doing its best to profit from the disarray within the center-right, the PSD itself continues to suffer from serious, potentially crippling internal divisions. According to Georgian Pop, a counselor of PSD President Mircea Geoana, Adrian Severin and his fellow "Department of International Relations" member, MP Dan Mihalache, are in "disgrace" with Geoana because they criticized his attempts to negotiate with the extremist PRM. Proof of the bad blood is Geoana's absence from the July 7 meeting, which would have presented an opportune moment for the ex-FM to articulate his party's viewpoints. PSD insiders tell us that Geoana is increasingly at risk of losing

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authority within the PSD, as the party's divided factions jockey for position and power. That said, numerous contacts have informed post of informal and discreet discussions between individual PSD powerbrokers and some elements of President Basescu's PD. This dialogue has focused on the possibility of a PD-PSD governing coalition at some point down the road, particularly if the relationship between the PNL and PD continues to deteriorate. End Comment.

¶10. (U) Amembassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNet website:
www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/bucharest
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